

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 01597 01 OF 03 041643Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-08 COME-00 LAB-04
SIL-01 HEW-04 /097 W
-----041808Z 024368 /41

R 041504Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5139
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 3 TEL AVIV 1597

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IS
SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE HAS COME FROM NOWHERE TO A PROBABLE THIRD PLACE AMONG ISRAEL'S POLITICAL PARTIES IN LESS THAN FOUR MONTHS. ITS FIRST TEST WILL OCCUR MARCH 15 WHEN IT HOLDS INTERNAL ELECTIONS FOR ITS KNESSET LIST AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE. SINCE IN PLACE OF THE USUAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP WILL VOTE FOR CANDIDATES, THERE COULD BE SOME SURPRISES. THE PARTY HAS MANY STARS--SOME WITH CONFLICTING VIEWS ON FOREIGN POLICY--AND DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE RESULTS OF THIS INTERNAL ELECTION COULD LEAD TO DEFECTIONS. THE PLATFORM IS YET TO BE WRITTEN, BUT THE DMC'S PROGRAM AS CONVEYED TO US BY YADIN CONSISTS OF "THREE AND ONE-HALF PRINCIPLES" CONCENTRATING ON INTERNAL PROBLEMS: ELECTORAL REFORM; CABINET REORGANIZATION; PRIORITY TO SOCIAL NEEDS; AND POSTPONEMENT OF ISRAELI-ARAB NEGOTIATIONS UNTIL ISRAEL PUTS ITS HOUSE IN ORDER.
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 01597 01 OF 03 041643Z

YADIN'S FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS DIFFER LITTLE FROM THE ALIGNMENT'S BUT IT IS DIFFICULT AT THIS POINT TO SAY WHETHER HE SPEAKS FOR THE PARTY IN THIS AREA. THE LATENT CONTRADICTIONS AMONG THE FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS OF DMC LEADERS WILL PROBABLY SURFACE WHEN THEY ATTEMPT TO DRAW UP A PLATFORM. IN THE MEANTIME, THE PARTY HAS SURPRISED MOST OBSERVERS BY ITS STRONG SHOWING IN THE

POLLS. WHETHER IT CAN MAINTAIN THIS POSITION AS THE CAMPAIGN HEATS UP IS STILL UNCERTAIN. END SUMMARY

1. THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE, STARTING FROM ZERO WHEN PROFESSOR YIGAL YADIN ANNOUNCED ITS FORMATION LAST NOVEMBER, HAS ACCORDING TO VIRTUALLY ALL POLLS COME TO OCCUPY THIRD PLACE AMONG THE PARTIES CONTESTING THE MAY 17 KNESSET ELECTION. IN THE OPINION OF MANY OBSERVERS, THE DMC STANDS AN EXCELLENT CHANCE OF BECOMING A PIVOTAL FORCE IN ISRAEL'S BODY POLITIC--AN INDISPENSABLE COALITION PARTNER IN ANY FUTURE GOVERNMENT. IT HAS APPEARED AT A TIME WHEN ISRAELIS SEEM INCREASINGLY TURNED OFF BY THE OLD POLITICS. MORE THAN ANY OF ITS COMPETITORS IT IS COMMITTED TO REFORM, CHANGE AND A FRESH START. WITH THE CAMPAIGN BARELY UNDERWAY, IT IS BEGINNING TO LOOK AS IF THE DMC WILL BE THE MAIN BENEFICIARY OF THE ELECTORATE'S DISAFFECTION.

2. MEANWHILE, THE FIRST BIG TEST FOR THE NEW PARTY WILL COME ON MARCH 15 WHEN IT WILL SELECT ITS LIST OF KNESSET CANDIDATES. CRITICS IN THE LABOR PARTY AND THE LIKUD SUGGEST THAT THE DMC COULD BREAK DOWN IN ITS "MOMENT OF TRUTH," BECAUSE, WITH 154 CANDIDATES FOR THE LIST AND EVERY PARTY MEMBER HAVING AN EQUAL VOICE IN THE SELECTION, THE LIST MAY BE WEAKENED BY INEXPERIENCED AND UNKNOWN AMATEURS AMONG THE TOP POSITIONS. THEY CLAIM THAT PARTY LEADERS OR SIGNIFICANT PERSONALITIES WHO DO NOT RECEIVE A SAFE PLACE ON THE LIST WILL IMMEDIATELY LEAVE THE PARTY. IN ANY EVENT, THESE "MAL-WISHERS" MAINTAIN THAT THE DMC LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TEL AV 01597 01 OF 03 041643Z

CONTAINS A POLYGLOT ASSORTMENT OF VIEWS, ESPECIALLY ON THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE, THAT WILL SPLIT THE PARTY ASUNDER ONCE IT IS FACED WITH RESPONSIBILITY (I.E., AFTER THE KNESSET ELECTION).

3. INITIALLY REGARDED AS JUST ONE MORE POLITICAL FLASH-IN-THE-PAN BUILT AROUND A PERSONALITY (YADIN), LIKE OTHERS THAT HAVE COME AND GONE ON THE ISRAELI SCENE AND WHICH ISRAEL'S PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM ENCOURAGES, THE DMC IS NOW TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY ITS COMPETITORS, INCLUDING THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES. THE FOLLOWING REPORT ON THE DMC AND ITS PROGRAM IS BASED PRIMARILY ON A CONVERSATION THE CHARGE' AND AN EMBOFF HAD WITH YADIN AND ON OTHER CONVERSATIONS WITH AMNON RUBENSTEIN, LEADER OF THE SHINUI (CHANGE) PROTEST MOVEMENT THAT MERGED WITH THE DMC; SHMUEL TAMIR, LEADER OF THE FREE CENTER PARTY THAT ALSO COMBINED WITH THE DMC; AS WELL AS WITH OTHER ADHERENTS TO THE NEW PARTY.

4. PERSONALITIES: FOR A BRAND NEW PARTY, THE DMC IS
STUDDERED WITH STARS. IN FACT SOME SAY IT IS TOP HEAVY.
FIRST THERE IS YADIN HIMSELF--FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF, A
HERO OF THE 1948 WAR AND RENOWNED ARCHAEOLOGIST AND
SCHOLAR. AMONG OTHER WELL-KNOWN FIGURES WHO FOUNDED THE
PARTY WITH YADIN OR WHO SUBSEQUENTLY JOINED IT ARE:
AMNON RUBENSTEIN, HAARETZ COLUMNIST, DEAN OF TEL AVIV
UNIVERSITY LAW FACULTY AND LEADER OF SHINUI BEFORE ITS
MERGER WITH THE DMC; SHMUEL TAMIR, VETERAN RIGHT-WING
POLITICIAN, MK AND LEADER OF THE FREE CENTER PARTY BEFORE
ITS MERGER WITH THE DMC; AKIVA NOFF, FORMER FREE
CENTER MK; MEIR AMIT, RESERVE GENERAL, WHO HAD SERVED
AS IDF HEAD OF OPERATIONS, CHIEF OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE
AND LATER OF MOSSAD, AND FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE LARGE
CONGLOMERATE, KOOR INDUSTRIES; DAN TOLKOWSKY, CHAIRMAN
OF ISRAEL'S DISCOUNT BANK INVESTMENT CO. AND FORMER
CHIEF OF IAF; MEIR ZOREA, RESERVE GENERAL, FORMER HEAD
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PAGE 04 TEL AV 01597 01 OF 03 041643Z

IS ISRAEL LAND AUTHORITY; ISRAEL GRANIT, RESERVE GENERAL
AND FORMER HEAD OF THE LABOR PARTY ORGANIZATION DEPARTMENT;
DAVID GOLOMB, FORMER LABOR MK; BENJAMIN HALEVI,
FORMER INDEPENDENT MK AND PRESIDING JUDGE AT THE
"EIGHMAN" TRIAL; SHMUEL TOLEDANO, FORMER ADVISER TO THE

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 01597 02 OF 03 041657Z
ACTION NEA-10

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USIA-06 ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-08 COME-00 LAB-04
SIL-01 HEW-04 /097 W

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 3 TEL AVIV 1597

PRIME MINISTER ON ARAB AFFAIRS; ZVI ZAMIR, MANAGER OF HAIFA REFINERIES AND FORMER CHIEF OF MOSSAD; SLEF WERTHEIMER, SUCCESSFUL INDUSTRIALIST AND LEADER IN SHINUI; AVRAHAM BOTSER, MANAGER OF THE EILAT-ASHKELON PIPELINE COMPANY AND FORMER HEAD OF THE ISRAEL NAVY; AND MENAHEM AVIRAM, MANAGER OF NESERH CEMENT.

5. ORGANIZATION. THE PARTY'S 37,000 PAID-UP MEMBERS WILL VOTE ON MARCH 15 FOR THE COMPOSITION OF THE LIST TO BE PRESENTED TO THE ELECTORATE AT THE MAY 17 KNESSET ELECTION. THE MEMBERS WILL SHOW THEIR PREFERENCES BY MARKING IN RANK ORDER 30 NAMES AMONG 154 CANDIDATES FOR THE DMC LIST (THE FIGURE 30 DOES NOT MEAN THE PARTY'S LIST WILL BE LIMITED TO THAT NUMBER) AND WILL ALSO ELECT A 120 MEMBER CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO RUN PARTY AFFAIRS AND WRITE A PLATFORM. THE MARCH 15 VOTES WILL BE TABULATED ACCORDING TO THE "SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE SYSTEM" WITH THE USE OF A COMPUTER.

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PAGE 02 TEL AV 01597 02 OF 03 041657Z

6. PROGRAM. YADIN BELIEVES THAT ISRAEL'S MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS ARE INTERNAL. THEY ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOLUTION ONLY THROUGH THOROUGH-GOING REFORM AND, UNTIL SUCH CHANGES CAN BE ACHIEVED, MOVEMENT TOWARD AN ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT MUST TAKE A BACKSEAT. PERHAPS 1977 CAN SEE THE BEGINNING OF A DIALOGUE, BUT NOT A SETTLEMENT. HE SPELLS OUT HIS PROGRAM IN WHAT HE CALLS "THREE AND ONE-HALF PRINCIPLES."

7. PRINCIPLE ONE: ELECTORAL REFORM. YADIN GIVES TOP PRIORITY TO ELECTORAL REFORM. HE WANTS A CONSTITUENCY SYSTEM, INCLUDING A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM OF PRIMARIES, TO REPLACE ISRAEL'S PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION. HE KNOWS THAT SEVERAL OTHER PARTIES HAVE LONG PROFESSED TO FAVOR ELECTORAL REFORM; THESE INCLUDE THE LABOR PARTY AND THE LIBERALS (THE LATTER'S PARTNER IN THE LIKUD, HERUT, HAS ONLY RECENTLY REVERSED ITS PREVIOUS OPPOSITION TO CHANGING THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM). BUT HE WILL INSIST, FROM ANY GOVERNMENT HE IS ASKED TO JOIN, ON IMPLEMENTATION BEING ACHIEVED BY CREATING A NEW MINISTRY OR A SIMILAR TOP LEVEL ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR ELECTORAL REFORM. YADIN IS COMMITTING HIMSELF TO ANOTHER ELECTION UNDER A REFORMED SYSTEM "WITHIN A YEAR OR TWO." HE BELIEVES TWO LARGE PARTIES WILL ULTIMATELY EMERGE FROM NEW ELECTIONS UNDER A REVISED SYSTEM; THESE PARTIES WOULD CENTER ON THE

EXISTING TWO BIG PARTIES, BOTH OF WHICH WILL BE FORCED TO MODERATE IN ORDER TO ATTRACT THE POLITICAL CENTER. YADIN SAID THERE WILL ALSO BE A THIRD SMALLER GROUPING BASED ON THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES.

8. PRINCIPLE TWO: REORGANIZATION OF THE CABINET. YADIN FAVORS THE CREATION OF TWO CLUSTERS OF MINISTRIES: ONE FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND ANOTHER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS. EACH MIGHT BE HEADED BY A SUPER-MINISTER. SUCH A REFORM MIGHT RESULT IN MORE MINISTERS BUT THEY NEED NOT ALL BE IN THE CABINET. HE WOULD GIVE THE POSITION OF DEPUTY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TEL AV 01597 02 OF 03 041657Z

PRIME MINISTER REAL TEETH BY HAVING IT RESPONSIBLE FOR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS UNDER THE PRIME MINISTER.

9. PRINCIPLE THREE:: PRIORITY TO SOCIAL NEEDS. YADIN BELIEVES THAT RABINOWITZ (AS SAPIR BEFORE HIM) IS A BUDGET-CENTERED MINISTER OF FINANCE WHO MAKES ISRAEL'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS MERELY A FUNCTION OF THE BUDGET. YADIN WOULD CHANNEL MORE RESOURCES TOWARD HELPING ISRAEL'S DISADVANTAGED, ESSENTIALLY THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY. THIS COULD BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT TOUCHING THE DEFENSE BUDGET BY "TURNING OFF SOME OF THE SPIGOTS" (GREATLY REDUCING SUBSIDIES IN CERTAIN AREAS OF THE ECONOMY). HE WOULD, FOR EXAMPLE, EARMARK MORE MONEY FOR SCHOOLS IN THE POORER NEIGHBORHOODS EVEN IF IT MEANT DEPRIVING SCHOOLS IN BETTER CLASS AREAS TO THE POINT WHERE FINANCIALLY WELL-OFF PARENTS MIGHT HAVE TO DECIDE BETWEEN THE CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND NICE CLOTHES. YADIN KNOWS THAT MOST FAMILIES OF ASHKENAZI BACKGROUND WOULD CHOOSE THE FORMER BECAUSE OF THEIR TRADITIONALLY GREAT EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION, WHEREAS MANY SEPHARDIC FAMILIES LACK THE EDUCATION TO MAKE INTELLIGENT CHOICES. HENCE, THE VICIOUS CIRCLE. IN 29 YEARS ISRAEL HAD NOT SOLVED ITS SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND THERE IS A DANGEROUS FEELING OF DISCRIMINATION.

10. THE DMC WOULD HAVE A FREER HAND TO PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND WOULD SPEND MORE ON "THE SECOND ISRAEL" AT THE EXPENSE OF PINCHING WEALTHY ISRAELIS. HE BELIEVES THAT, WITH MORE FREEDOM, THE ECONOMY COULD REGISTER HIGHER GROWTHS, EMPLOYMENT AND EXPORTS. ISRAEL HAS TWO ADVANTAGES: BRAIN POWER AND A SKILLED LABOR FORCE THAT, RELATIVE TO MOST INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES, IS STILL CHEAP. "ISRAEL IS A MIDGET WITH A LARGE BRAIN."

11. PRINCIPLE THREE AND ONE-HALF: POSTPONEMENT OF NEGOTIATIONS. YADIN RECOGNIZES THAT THE "HALF PRINCIPLE" MAY RUN COUNTER TO THE AMERICAN TIMETABLE BUT HE ARGUES THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 TEL AV 01597 02 OF 03 041657Z

ISRAEL CANNOT NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT UNLESS AND UNTIL IT PUTS ITS HOUSE IN ORDER. HE SAYS THAT THE THREE INTERIM AGREEMENTS WERE POSSIBLE, DESPITE THE VOCIFEROUS OPPOSITION OF THE RIGHT-WING, BECAUSE THEY CHIPPED AWAY AT THE TERRITORIAL FRINGES AND DID NOT, FOR EXAMPLE, TOUCH THE WEST BANK. FUTURE CONCESSIONS WILL NOT BE MERELY MORE DIFFICULT, BUT UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS, ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE FOR ISRAEL TO NEGOTIATE. TO ACHIEVE FURTHER PROGRESS IN SOLVING THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT, ISRAEL REQUIRES A STRONG GOVERNMENT WHICH CAN SELL A TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE TO THE PUBLIC AND CAPITALIZE ON THE LATENT UNDERSTANDING AMONG ISRAELIS THAT TERRITORY MUST BE YIELDED TO OBTAIN PEACE. ONLY A REFORM OF THE SYSTEM CAN PRODUCE A SUFFICIENTLY STRONG GOVERNMENT. RABIN, FOR EXAMPLE, IS NOT MASTER OF HIS OWN CABINET--IS NOT FREE TO PICK HIS MINISTERS. HE IS HAMSTRUNG IN IMPLEMENTING HIS PROGRAM

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 01597 03 OF 03 041633Z
ACTION NEA-10

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 3 OF 3 TEL AVIV 1597

BY THE CONFLICTING INTERESTS OF HIS COALITION PARTNERS.

12. YADIN'S TERRITORIAL VIEWS: YADIN OPPOSES A RETURN TO THE 1967 LINES. HE FORESEES THE POSSIBILITY OF MUTUAL BORDER ADJUSTMENTS ON THE WEST BANK. IN GENERAL, HE SUPPORTS THE CONTENTS OF THE ALLON PLAN BUT OBJECTS TO THE GOI PROMULGATING IT AS POLICY. THIS WOULD CONSTITUTE A SORT OF PRECONDITION TO NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS. ISRAEL INSISTS ON NO ARAB PRE-CONDITIONS AND SHOULD NOT OFFER ITS OWN.

13. ISRAEL MUST BE "JEWISH AND DEMOCRATIC" AND THAT MEANS WITHDRAWING FROM MUCH OF THE WEST BANK. BUT ISRAEL CANNOT ACCEPT A SEPARATE PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK. THE PALESTINIANS MUST FIND THEIR NATIONAL EXPRESSION IN A STATE WHOSE CAPITAL WOULD BE EAST OF THE JORDAN RIVER. ABOUT HALF THE POPULATION OF PRESENT DAY JORDAN CONSISTS OF WEST BANKERS EVEN NOW. THEY MAY CALL THEIR COUNTRY JORDAN OR PALESTINE OR SOMETHING ELSE. THEY MAY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 TEL AV 01597 03 OF 03 041633Z

WELL REPLACE THE HASHEMITE DYNASTY WITH THE PLO; IT IS UP TO THE PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES TO DETERMINE WHAT GOVERNMENT THEY WILL HAVE, BUT THEY CANNOT HAVE TWO COUNTRIES. HE THOUGHT THAT THE SELLING OF THIS ARRANGEMENT TO THE PALESTINIANS AS A FINAL SETTLEMENT WOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT. IF THE U.S. SUPPORTS A PROSPEROUS, INDEPENDENT ISRAEL, IT MUST ACCEPT THIS SOLUTION AS A SINE QUA NON. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF U.S. INTERESTS REQUIRED HASHEMITE RULE IN AMMAN, ISRAEL COULD SUBSCRIBE TO THIS PROVIDED THE SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINE PROBLEM WOULD BE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME (ISRAEL AND A JORDANIAN-PALESTINIAN STATE). HOWEVER, CONVINCING WEST BANK ARABS TO ACCEPT A RETURN OF HUSSEIN'S GOVERNMENT AS THE CORE OF A SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM MIGHT BE A VERY SLOW EDUCATIONAL PROCESS.

14. COMMENT: AT THIS STAGE, BEFORE THE PARTY'S INTERNAL ELECTIONS AND THE SUBSEQUENT DRAFTING OF A PLATFORM, IT IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE TO WHAT EXTENT YADIN REALLY SPEAKS FOR HIS FOLLOWING, PARTICULARLY ON FOREIGN POLICY. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN A DOVE LIKE RUBENSTEIN AND HAWKS LIKE ZOREA AND TOLKOWSKY IS STRIKING. THE LATTER HAVE VOICED OPPOSITION TO YEIDLING (AT LEAST MILITARY) CONTROL OF ANY PART OF THE WEST BANK AND ARE KNOWN TO BE ESPECIALLY CYNICAL ABOUT PEACE PROSPECTS. WHILE THE LABOR PARTY ALSO CONTAINS DOVES AND HAWKS, THERE IS IN THAT PARTY A WEB OF COMMON IDEALS AND EXPERIENCE SUCH AS COMMITMENT TO SOCIALISM, GROWING UP IN THE MOVEMENT, INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT, ETC., THAT BINDS ITS LEADERS TOGETHER. APART FROM A PROFESSED DESIRE FOR REFORM, NO SUCH TIES SEEM TO EXIST AMONG THE DMC STALWARTS.

15. THE DMC'S PROBLEM IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE TEMPEST THAT AROSE WITHIN THE PARTY FOLLOWING A RECENT YADIN INTERVIEW. AS PUBLISHED, YADIN ENVISAGED THE DMC JOINING A FUTURE ALIGNMENT-LED COALITION GOVERNMENT BUT VIRTUALLY RULED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TEL AV 01597 03 OF 03 041633Z

OUT ITS ENTERING INTO A COLAITION WITH THE LIKUD OR THE NRP. ANGRY VOICES WERE HEARD IN THE DMC AND YADIN WAS FORCED TO BACK DOWN. RIGHTISTS IN THE PARTY, WHOSE VIEWS ARE CONGENIAL TO THE LIKUD'S, WERE DISMAYED; OTHERS VIEWED THE STATEMENT AS POLITICALLY UNWISE AND UNNECESSARILY RESTRICTING THE DMC'S SCOPE OF APPEAL. WHERE IS THE "CHANGE" IF HE IS GOING TO GO WITH THE ALIGNMENT, WAS A FREQUENT QUESTION

16. POLITICIANS WITH DIFFERING VIEWS ON EXTERNAL ISSUES HAVE MANGED TO SUBMERGE THOSE DIFFERENCES FOR THE SAKE OF A COMMON INTEREST IN DOMESTIC REFORM AS PROMISED BY THE DMC. CONTRADICTIONS ON TERRITORIAL POLICY MAY OR MAY NOT SUFRACE BEFORE MAY 1,7, BUT THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE DIVISIVE AFTER THE ELECTION SHOULD THE PROSPECTS OF PARTNERSHIP IN A COALITION ARISE. PERHPAS THE ONE REASONABLY CERTAIN CHANGE TO EXPECT FROM A GOVERNMENT WITH A MAJOR DMC COMPONENT IS ELECTORAL REFORM, PROBABLY LEADING TO ANOTHER ELECTION ON A NEW BASIS WITHIN TWO YEARS. OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE DMC (YADIN'S) PROGRAM ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE CANDIDATES FOR COMPROMISE OR REINTER- PRETATION.

17. BEYOND THE NEW WRAPPINGS, THERE IS LITTLE IN YADIN'S PROGRAM OF REFORMS THAT IS PARTICULARLY NEW OR THAT CANNOT BE FOUND IN OTHER PARTIES, EXCEPT PERHPAS THE ZEAL OF HIS FOLLOWERS AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO CHANGE. SO FAR THIS SEEMS TO BE ENOUGH TO ATTRACT A SUBSTANTIAL CHUNK OF THE ELECTORATE. BUT THE CAMPAIGN IS JUST GETTING UNDERWAY; THE BIG UNDS OF THE ALIGNMENT AND THE LIKUD HAVE YET TO ZERO IN ON THE VOTER AND NO ONE KNOWS WHAT THE IDES OF MARCH WILL BRING.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DEMOCRACY, FORM OF GOVERNMENT, SOCIAL CHANGE, ELECTION FORECASTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 04-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TELAV01597
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Line Count: 430
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 8
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3201140
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE BEGIN SUMMARY: THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE HAS COME FROM NOWHERE TO A PROBABLE THIRD PLACE AMONG ISRAE
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/38cf12bd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009